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FM REO HILLAH
TO RUEHGB/AMEMBASSY BAGHDAD PRIORITY 0878
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SUBJECT: DUSD BRINKLEY VISITS KARBALA

11. Sensitive but unclassified. This is a PRT Karbala cable.

12. (SBU) Summary: DUSD Brinkley and his delegation, GOI spokesman Ali al Dubbagh, and PRT Leader were warmly received by Governor Aqeel for a five hour visit that was covered extensively by local media, and included lunch and a visit to several agribusiness sites in the green zone around Karbala. DUSD Brinkley offered a grant of USD one million worth of polythene wrap and clips to Karbala's DG of Agriculture for the construction of covered growing houses, and over a longer term offered to look into the possibility of cooperating to support the revival of a poultry plant, and link up potential investors and agricultural experts with Karbala agbusinesses via DVC. End Summary

12. (U) Karbala Governor Aqeel warmly welcomed and accompanied DUSD Paul Brinkley and his delegation, Karbala native and GOI spokesman Ali al-Dubbagh, and PRT leader to Karbala on November 15 and accompanied the group on its five hour visit to Karbala. After a warm reception at the Governorate compound, the delegation proceeded to tour the greenbelt, a seven by fourteen kilometer project on the desert side of Karbala where thousands of eucalyptus trees have been planted. Karbala Agricultural DG Al-Her noted that the project, which needed 53 wells, and one thousand workers, was sixty percent completed. The DG described the challenges that agriculture faces in Karbala, including lack of cold storage, the need for a polythene plant so the farmers could build covered growing houses, and the lack of agricultural tariffs, which meant that cheap agricultural imports from Iran made it impossible for farmers to grow many crops profitably. Al Her noted that Karbala was rich in date production, and over 100,000 people depend on date farming for a living. However, production only covers fifteen percent of demand so there was little product left over to develop an export business. He added that there were now no pesticide spray facilities, that seed tissue culture was below California/Gulf levels, and that the water available for agriculture in Karbala had a high salt content. U.S. date yields from comparable fields were three-and-a-half times Karbala yields.

13. (U) DUSD offered the Karbala Agricultural DG a USD one million grant of polythene wrap that he will be able to distribute to Karbala farmers, which should enable farmers to increase yields of crops dramatically. He also agreed to look into working to assist a poultry farm the group visited. DUSD Brinkley also promised to facilitate communication between American agricultural investors and experts and Karbala's farmers and the agricultural DG (Note: we will do this at the Regional Embassy Office in Al Hillah by DVC as a first step to see where the conversation leads.)

14. (SBU) DUSD Brinkley's visit was accorded media coverage throughout the day. For this reason alone, the visit was highly successful. In a PIC province where the PRTs had little access until two months back, the subliminal media message from Karbala government is that American groups are welcome to come to

participate in the business of reconstruction and develop
business ties.

SIMMONS